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98 Weekly parts No. 3

THE BRITISH EMPIRE

SHOWDOWN WITH SPAIN

Drake Beats the Armada

Australia & New Zealand 70c South Africa 60c Canada 95c

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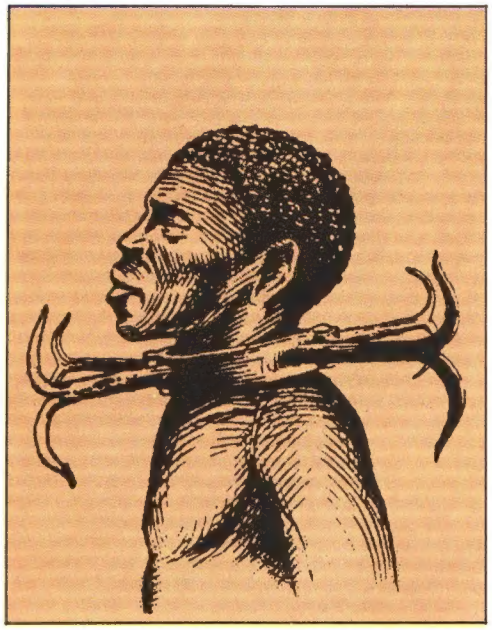

Issue No. 4: Black Ivory. Under this macabre nickname, millions of black Africans were sold into slavery in the New World. This issue tells of Britain's profitable role in the grisly trade.

Issue No. 5: Earth's Only Paradise. English settlers in North America thought they would find gold. Wealth there was, but of the soil, and to win it took great courage and labour.

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Cover: This late 16th-Century painting of one of the engagements between English and Spanish ships is one of the earliest known depictions of the defeat of the Spanish Armada.

These tokens are valuable see inside back cover.

SHOWDOWN WITH SPAIN

In 1561, Philip II of Spain was incensed to learn that the piratical English denied the sanctity of his God-given Empire. War was inevitable, but neither Philip nor Elizabeth was anxious to speed that day. Matching move and counter-move as watchfully as two chess players (their roles in this modern sculpture) the two sovereigns manœuvred warily from crisis to crisis for another 27 years before war came ✠

The Tate Gallery (Detail).

By Lacey Baldwin Smith

The news of England's uncompromisingly aggressive attitude came from Alvarez de la Quadra, the Spanish Ambassador in London. He was profoundly disturbed; nothing he could say or threaten seemed to have the least effect upon Elizabeth of England or her councillors. The English, against both God and reason, were claiming the "right to go to all lands or provinces belonging to friendly states without exception."

The Ambassador's words went to the core of the forthcoming struggle between the two kingdoms. Spain saw her Empire as a closed mercantile preserve, sanctified by the Pope, and delivered into Spanish hands by God himself for the purpose of bringing Catholic light to the heathen multitude and striking down the enemies of the true faith wherever they might be found. The heretic English, on the other hand, argued that commercially the Lord was neutral; no pontifical proclamation could partition the earth, for the sea-lanes were open to all.

King Philip II of Spain held that a foreign trader was a brigand and any country that transgressed his imperial laws an enemy; Elizabeth, who as the half-sister of his dead wife, Mary, might have been expected to show more deference, pointed out that those laws were Spanish, not English, and that control of a few strategic ports did not necessarily constitute an empire or full maritime control. Only if the two monarchs were at open war could her brother-in-law treat legitimate merchantmen as pirates.

Whether simple economic rivalry between a defensive, monopolistic Spain and an aggressive, free-enterprise England would alone have generated sufficient hatred and misunderstanding to have led to war is problematical; add, however, religious hysteria and a spectacular shift in the European balance of power, and a showdown was unavoidable. Only the timing was surprising, for Elizabeth and Philip persistently and arrogantly refused to recognize the inevitable, and by their patience, indecision and dislike of military solutions came close to proving the pundits wrong.

Throughout the 1560s, imperial Spain stood at the pinnacle of her political, military, economic and spiritual power. To be sure, Philip's uncle, Ferdinand had a more impressive title as ruler of the Holy Roman Empire. His domain dominated the centre of Europe, but it was a poverty-stricken historic myth which the Reformation had left in religious shambles. The kings of France possessed an older throne and a kingdom with about twice the population of Aragon and Castile, but the last of the Valois dynasty were a degenerate race and their realm was torn by feudal and religious war.

In contrast, Philip's crowns were world-wide and his resources seemingly endless. He was Lord of Burgundy, Archduke of Milan, King of Naples, and monarch of an Empire stretching from the Philippines to the Caribbean, from the Straits of Magellan to the coast of California. The annual profits of world conquest – at the opening of the 16th Century a trickle of £213,400 – had swelled in 70 years to a golden torrent of £16,890,000; Spanish soldiers were the finest on the Continent, and Philip himself the acknowledged leader of a resurgent Catholicism bent on destroying the monster of heresy. No sovereign was more dedicated, no people surer of divine favour, no kingdom more zealous to do the Lord's bidding.

Power, however overwhelming, has its limitations; and for all his royal titles and treasure fleets, Philip was more a paper titan than a solid economic and political giant. Though diplomatically Spanish prestige was unrivalled, her economic strength was a façade. The riches of the Potosí silver-mines remained in Spain only long enough to inflate the currency before finding their way into the money-bags of beer-drinking Flemish merchants who supplied the Empire with most of the sinews of war – pitch, lumber and hemp for the navy, saltpetre and tin for the artillery, and the Friday diet of dried fish for the army. Technologically, the world was passing Spain by. The ship-wrights of Cadiz and Seville continued to build clumsy galleons – floating fortresses garrisoned by soldiers – instead of swift manœuvrable ship-destroying vessels manned by sailors. The navy continued to depend upon giant galleasses with banks of oars and manacled slaves, which worked well in the Mediterranean but were ill-suited to defend the sea-lanes of world Empire. Even spiritually Spain was withering. As *conquistadores* gave way to bureaucrats, innovation was stifled under piles of administrative orders, and conformity became a greater virtue than efficiency.

Nowhere was Spain's weakness so dramatically displayed as in the Netherlands, seemingly the jewel of Philip's Empire but actually torn by religious and political strife. Throughout the Lowlands conformity either to the decrees of the Mother Church or to the maritime regulations of the Empire was sadly lacking, and the more Spanish arms sought to enforce orthodoxy by edicts written in blood, the more Dutch nationalism and heresy flourished. By 1566 Spain had a full-scale revolt on her hands which consumed the profits of Empire even faster than the treasure fleets could carry them to Seville.

Then there was England, a kingdom of heretics which gave aid and comfort to Philip's Dutch rebels and, as Ambassador Quadra lamented, was set upon testing the strength of Spanish imperial regulations throughout the New World. For years Englishmen had been poaching in Iberian waters, but with a difference; in earlier decades England's energy had been consumed by civil and religious commotion and dissent, and her commercial incursions into Portuguese and Spanish monopolies had been small apologetic affairs without official support. As early as the 1530s Mr. William Hawkins of Plymouth had sensed the potential of trade with West Africa and South America and he had sailed to the Guinea coast and Brazil, exchanging hatchets and bangles, knives and, of all things, 19 dozen nightcaps for "olyphante's tethe" and "Brasil-wood."

His ventures made no economic sense; the realm was engrossed in the King's "Great Matter" – his divorce from Catherine of Aragon – and Channel pirates supplied all the ivory and Brazil wood needed by English craftsmen and cloth-dyers. A generation later, Thomas Wyndham opened up Moroccan sugar and fruits to English traders and pushed further down the coast in search of gold, ivory and pepper, but in 1553 he and two-thirds of his crew died, victims not of

Spanish troops land to attack a Portuguese army in the Azores in 1580, when Philip seized Portugal as part of his dream to unite Europe – including England – under Catholicism.

Dutch Protestants fight soldiers of their Spanish rulers in 1585. Elizabeth sent 6,000 troops to aid the rebels, a move which intensified the festering conflict with Spain.

Portuguese guns but of two other sentinels – malaria and dysentery.

Captains and crews perished but the urge "for gold, for praise, for glory" continued and grew. By the 1560s Englishmen had been to the Arctic, established trade with the Prince of Muscovy and were claiming that Divine Providence had reserved the northern regions for English colonists and merchants. Even the loss in 1558 of Calais, the last foothold of England's medieval empire, did not halt the expansion; mariners and merchants simply looked further down the Channel and out into the Atlantic for future victories and profits. A country once land-oriented now turned to the sea, marking the shoals and currents of the Channel, gaining navigational experience and planning ships of revolutionary design. Within 18 years of Elizabeth's succession the *Revenge* was launched, a 500-ton galleon designed not to carry troops but to be an engine of war, nimble, durable and dangerous. It was predictable that upstart Elizabethans in their sleek new ships would eventually clash with Spain, but it was symbolic that the first Englishman to do so should have been John Hawkins, son of old William Hawkins of "olyphante's tethe" fame, and the man most responsible for building the navy that in 1588 would destroy Spanish maritime supremacy.

For years John Hawkins had been gathering information about the Spanish West Indies and the effect of Philip's centralized and cumbersome imperial regulations. All Spanish colonial trade was geared to the sailing dates of the giant treasure *flota* which sailed early each spring from Seville for Martinique. There it split – half going to the Isthmus of Panama, half to Mexico – to rejoin during the late summer at Havana for the long trip home via the Azores. Outward-bound, Philip's ships carried taffetas and silks, Andalusian wine and the Toledo steel which the colonists so prized; on the return trip they transported West Indian sugar, Mexican hides, Peruvian silver and the spices of the Orient shipped first across the Pacific and then hauled overland from the west coast of South America. Except when the fleet was actually in West Indian waters, there was almost no naval defence. Philip was long

on decrees but short on warships, and the Caribbean was at the mercy of French pirates, Dutch interlopers and, Mr. Hawkins hoped, English slave-runners.

Slavery stood at the root of the English enterprise, for although the West Indian economy was dependent on negro labour, the official duty on imported blacks was so high that imperial customs officials winked at the flourishing black market in slavery. It was a sordid business, but extremely lucrative for the individuals of many nations who indulged in it, and in 1562 that was the aspect of the venture that interested the investors in Hawkins's first voyage. After a short stop off the coast of Senegal to gather his human cargo, Hawkins sailed for Hispaniola (modern Haiti) and bartered 300 black men for sugar, hides and gold. One hundred and five slaves had to be given outright to the Spanish officials at San Domingo to induce them to overlook trifling commercial irregularities, but even so the profits were spectacular; so much so that slave-running from West Africa became a government enterprise.

This Spanish map of the arena for the coming Anglo-Spanish conflict displays a detailed knowledge of continental coasts but vast ignorance of Britain's northern reaches.

Most of the Privy Council bought shares in John Hawkins's second voyage, and the Queen herself presented a floating fossil incongruously christened the *Jesus of Lübeck* as her contribution to the slave trade. Clearly, merchant Hawkins of Plymouth considered himself as an instrument of international policy in the Queen's Majesty's service.

Despite Spanish threats, his fleet of three vessels sailed in October, 1564, on a venture almost as successful as the first. Spanish officials, it is true, demanded higher bribes, the colonists were more hesitant to buy for fear of government reprisal and investors had to make do with a paltry 60 per cent return on their money, but what the expedition may have lost in profits it made up in experience. Never before had an English fleet anchored off the Spanish Main or Devonshire sailors tasted a potato. For the first time Englishmen watched the natives of Florida smoking a "kind of dried herb," and the Royal Navy learned about that convenient contrivance, the hammock.

Had the Queen and John Hawkins quit when they were ahead, history might have been very different, but the third and final expedition of 1567 ended in a débâcle, the consequences of which led to the Armada 21 years later. Philip had given orders that imperial regulations were to be rigorously enforced and that Hawkins and his crew were to be treated as pirates, to be destroyed by fair means or foul. Early in the voyage the English sensed the change when they stopped off at the Canaries for provisions. Spanish greetings were cordial, but Hawkins noticed that guns were trained on his ships, and he wisely did not tarry.

Slave-raiding along the African coast also proved difficult. The natives were becoming wary of the white man, beads and brightly coloured cloth in one hand, a musket in the other, and the Portuguese were learning to protect their slaving interests, but the kings of Castros and Sierra Leone offered a happy solution to the problem. They promised the English as many slaves as their ships would hold in return for military aid in tribal war. Hawkins did not secure as many prisoners

as he had hoped; as the white slave-traders stood helplessly by, the overwhelming majority of captives were eaten or butchered according to the rules of tribal genocide. Nevertheless, the rewards were still high: at the cost of four white sailors dead and as many critically wounded, Hawkins shipped over 300 blacks westward to the Caribbean.

All went well until the moment of return to England; then in September, 1568, the antiquated *Jesus of Lübeck* nearly foundered in a tropical storm and the entire expedition had to seek safety at San Juan de Ulua, the Mexican port of disembarkation for the *flota* from Seville. As Hawkins was repairing his flagship, Philip's new Viceroy, Don Martin Enriquez, arrived with the treasure fleet. On a written promise from the Viceroy that the English would not be molested, Hawkins reluctantly made room in the crowded port for Enriquez's fleet.

What ensued was, depending on one's perspective, either foul treachery or sensible opportunism designed to teach brigands and heretics a lesson. Seizing his chance when Hawkins was at the dinner-table, and utilizing his overwhelming manpower, Enriquez led a surprise attack against the English squadron. For the first time Spanish and English ships fought it out, and only Captain Hawkins in the *Minion* and young Francis Drake in the 50-ton *Judith* escaped.

The loss of most of Hawkins's fleet was only a preview of horrors to come. Four hundred men had originally sailed from Plymouth; half were now jammed into the *Minion* which was inexplicably "forsaken" in its "great misery" by the *Judith* and left without food or water. Neither the gods nor Philip of Spain were gentle to the survivors. Faced with starvation, 100 men asked to be set ashore on the Mexican coast to take their chances; possibly two-thirds lived and ended up in Spanish jails to be given away as prize servants. Englishmen made particularly valuable slave overseers in the Mexican silver-mines, but the fate of those captured at San Juan de Ulua was considerably worse – seaman John Moon received 200 lashes and six years in the galley; George Ribley of Gravesend was strangled and burned at the stake; and Robert Barrett, Master of the *Jesus* and Drake's cousin, was transported all the way to the market-place of Seville to die in an *auto-da-fé*, the Inquisitorial "act of faith" in which heretics were judged and burnt at the stake.

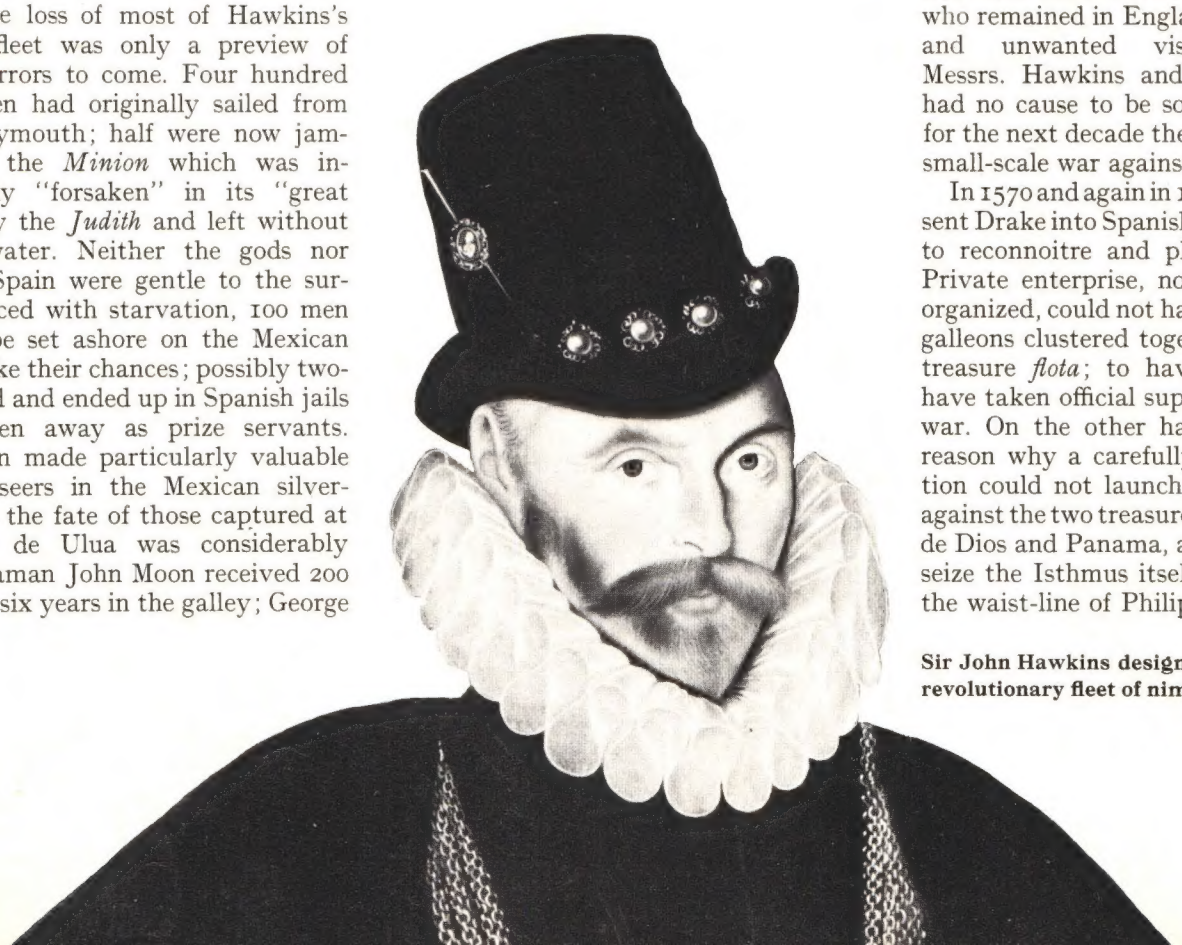
The suffering of those who stayed aboard the *Minion* was no less terrible. Cold, starvation and disease accounted for half the crew, and as Hawkins approached European waters he grew so desperate that he took refuge in an Iberian port. Spanish charity, however, proved even more fatal than Spanish guns; only 15 men are said to have survived the orgy of meat, fruit and wine which the commander could not prevent his starving men from bolting down.

Spain's commercial monopoly had been dramatically defended and the English interlopers repelled, but the results of the Battle of San Juan de Ulua were more than Philip had bargained for. Two men were now bent on revenge. If John Hawkins was to be treated as a pirate, he would act as a pirate. He had, he reported, lost £28,000 as a consequence of Enriquez's treachery, and he was determined that every blood-smeared penny should be paid back with interest. As for Francis Drake, before San Juan de Ulua he had been a junior sea-captain of no importance; now he became *El Draque* – "The Dragon" – a fanatic set upon punishing Philip for the perfidy of his Viceroy.

Another dimension was thus added to the cold war which Elizabeth and Philip had been waging for years – the English Queen sanctioning Hawkins's "trading" incursions into the Caribbean, ignoring blatant piracy in the Channel against Iberian shipping and permitting Dutch privateers to use English ports; the Spanish King lending cautious support to Mary Queen of Scots' efforts to unseat her Tudor rival and allowing his Ambassador to arrange intricate, if inept, Catholic plots to murder Elizabeth. On top of all this, just when Elizabeth had learned of the massacre of Hawkins's fleet, Philip was outraged by his sister-in-law's impudent confiscation of a great Genoese merchantman full of gold borrowed to pay Spanish troops in the Netherlands. The vessel had slipped into an English harbour to escape Dutch pirates, and the Queen renegotiated the loan with Philip's Italian bankers.

Both monarchs, however, shied away from hot war, for neither was ready for a showdown. Philip had his hands full in the Netherlands and had yet to crush Muslim sea-power in the Mediterranean. Elizabeth always backed away from any decision as irrevocable as war; moreover, her northern shires were in open revolt, her naval wall of great new galleons was still a dream in Hawkins's imagination and no decision had been made about Mary of Scotland, who remained in England as a dangerous and unwanted visitor-cum-prisoner. Messrs. Hawkins and Drake, however, had no cause to be so circumspect, and for the next decade they waged their own small-scale war against Spain.

In 1570 and again in 1571 John Hawkins sent Drake into Spanish Caribbean waters to reconnoitre and plan their revenge. Private enterprise, no matter how well organized, could not handle Philip's great galleons clustered together in the yearly treasure *flota*; to have done so would have taken official support and full-scale war. On the other hand, there was no reason why a carefully planned expedition could not launch a surprise attack against the two treasure depots of Nombre de Dios and Panama, and with luck even seize the Isthmus itself, thereby cutting the waist-line of Philip's Empire. It was



Sir John Hawkins designed England's revolutionary fleet of nimble new ships.

THE DRAGON OF THE SPANISH MAIN

"Just look at Drake," cried Pope Sixtus V after the old sea-dog's raid on Cadiz in 1587. "Who is he? What forces has he?" Many Spaniards would have replied that *El Draque* "The Dragon," was a devil with power over winds. His exploits justified his reputation as a dauntless adventurer: his three-year trip round the world netted Spanish spoils amounting to an astronomical £1,500,000.

No wonder that on his return in 1580, Queen Elizabeth knighted her "master thief" on the deck of his ship, the *Golden Hind*. And no wonder that the Pope, after hearing about the fleet that Philip was assembling, muttered dubiously: "We are sorry to say it, but we have a poor opinion of this Spanish Armada and fear some disaster."

This portrait of Drake, an affable stocky red-haired West Countryman, shows him resting his hand on a Spanish helmet, a symbol of his dominance over his arch-enemy. A globe recalls that he was the first Englishman to sail round the world.

After capturing the Spanish treasure ship *Cacafuego* – "Spitfire" – (right) in 1579, Drake scathingly suggested his prize be renamed *Cacaplata*, "Spitsilver" and that he take the old name, as the labels recall.

Drake's Drum, used to summon his crew, had an honoured place aboard the *Golden Hind*. It became a talisman and after the Armada superstitious Englishmen believed that the drum would beat if England were ever again threatened by Spain.

In 1585, Drake's troops (advancing from the right) sacked Santiago in the Spanish-owned Cape Verde Islands. On the same expedition he humiliated Spain by holding San Domingo and Cartagena to ransom.

Drake's dial was a unique miniature aid to navigation. Designed in 1569, it combined in one instrument a compass, a quadrant, tables of latitude and tide-tables.

a mad project, but behind the ruddy cheeks and tub-like frame of Captain Francis Drake there resided a crusader, greedy for gold and adventure but even greedier for revenge upon the enemies of the Lord. Consequently, Francis Drake, with two of his brothers and 71 men in two small craft weighing in all less than 100 tons, sailed forth on May 24, 1572, to inflict God's punishment on the world's mightiest Empire.

Drake sailed directly to a prepared secret anchorage near the southern base of the Isthmus where he put together four small pinnaces for a swift night attack on Nombre de Dios. The assault was a military success but a financial flop – not an ingot of gold was found, for the treasure-houses were full only when the *flota* was in harbour. Then followed a year of frustration as Drake waited in hiding for the arrival of the treasure fleet. This time he planned an overland attack through the dense jungles of Darien to seize the mule-trains carrying the gold and silver of Peru and the silks of the Orient from Panama.

It was during that trek, on February 11, 1573, that Francis Drake first encountered "the great south sea" and made a prophetic prayer. As the exhausted English troops led by their half-negro, half-Indian Cimaroon allies struggled through the semi-tropical forests, they reached a point half-way across the Isthmus. There from a tree-top Drake beheld the blue Caribbean on one side and the vastness of the Pacific on the other, and he called upon "Almighty God of His goodness to give him life and leave to sail once in an English ship upon that sea."

The 16th Century was strong on petitions to the Deity and it was careless of Drake not to have included in his prayer a request for assistance in his war against the Spanish. His carefully planned trap to ambush the mule-train was prematurely sprung by an English sailor filled with brandy, and all the marauders got for their efforts were unmanageable bales of cheap cloth. Two weeks later, at the eleventh hour, English luck finally turned. On the very outskirts of Nombre de Dios they captured a mule-train rich in gold and silver, and Drake sailed away, his "voyage made" and the flag of St. George flying at his topmast.

Twenty thousand pounds in gold and silver securely locked in English sea-chests did a great deal to make Drake welcome at Plymouth, but the Queen, officially at least, was not pleased. She was bent on peaceful relations with her brother-in-law and had no intentions of openly contenancing piracy in Spanish waters, for Elizabeth invariably preferred diplomacy and subterfuge to war. Moreover, her instincts to shy away from piracy were correct: for the next four years scarcely a single English raid on the Spanish Main was successful. In 1574 John Nobles and all his crew, except for two cabin-boys, were hanged for piracy at Nombre de Dios, which "occasioned great joy" in Madrid; two years later Andrew Parker, a Bristol merchant, and 12 of his men ended on a Spanish execution block; and John Oxenham and all of his officers died on a gibet in the market-square of Lima, three years after his captured crew had been summarily executed for piracy.

In the year 1577 Elizabeth gave official support to Drake's prayer to sail in an English ship upon "the great south sea." In theory the voyage had unobjectionable aims: to discover *Terra Australis Incognita*, the "unknown land of the South" or great southern continent which geographers assumed must span the antipodes as a counterweight to the land-masses in the Northern Hemisphere; to open it up to English trade and settlement; and then push on to the spice islands of the East Indies.

But no one doubted what the English planned, and according to Drake the Queen told him privately that she "would gladly be revenged on the King of Spain for divers injuries."

Drake's voyage, which ended up as a circumnavigation of the globe, was a buccaneer's daydream come true; not only was he the first Englishman to sail his ship into the fabled spice islands of the Moluccas and to entrance Oriental potentates with Elizabethan music, but off the western coast of Panama Mr. John Hawkins was also amply revenged when the *Golden Hind* encountered the *Cacafuego*, a treasure ship containing "thirteen chests full of reals of plate, four score pound weight of gold, and six and twenty tons of silver."

By now both sides had reluctantly concluded that only war could resolve a controversy which was rapidly assuming epic proportions. From the Catholic perspective of Madrid it was clear that the English she-dragon had to be destroyed, for she was nurturing rebellious and heretical subjects in the Netherlands and sanctioning piracy on the high seas. In London it was apparent that God's chosen people could not save the Protestant elect from the Duke of Parma's disciplined Spanish troops in the Lowlands unless Philip and his Catholic horde were crushed.

In 1583 Philip committed one of the few heedless deeds in his otherwise prudent life. Faced with a disastrous failure of the Spanish wheat crop, the King asked London merchants to send relief supplies. Then he confiscated every last English ship. Spanish treachery, however, was greater than Spanish efficiency; one vessel escaped and, through one of those extraordinary accidents of history, the Governor of Bilbao who had organized the seizure was captured and carried off to England. In his boot was discovered Philip's personal order to confiscate the grain ships and evidence that he intended to use those same vessels to fulfil "God's obvious design" – the punishment of Elizabeth of England, that "incestuous bastard, begotten and born in sin."

Retaliation was swift and deadly. In 1585, a joint-stock military expedition was organized against the nerve-centre of Philip's Empire, the Caribbean. Twenty-nine ships and 2,300 men sailed under Drake's command. Two colonial capitals were the objectives – San Domingo, the administrative heart of the Indies, and Cartagena, the seemingly impregnable capital of the Spanish Main. San Domingo fell in a brilliant amphibious assault, and Drake managed to extract £7,000 in ransom.

Cartagena gave way more to hysteria within than Englishmen without, and was ransomed back for £25,000. There were glory and praise sufficient for all but profit for none. Some £32,000 in ransom, 240 brass cannon and a dozen or so church bells scarcely made the enterprise an economic success, and shareholders had to settle for 15 shillings on the pound. The international effect, however, was more heartening. The Bank of Seville went bankrupt and Spanish troops in the Netherlands went unpaid ❧

THE EMBATTLED TUDORS

England at Elizabeth's succession in 1558 was "ragged and torn with misgovernment." Her father, Henry VIII, had broken with Rome over his divorce and remarriage, creating implacable Catholic enemies. His Catholic daughter, Mary, married to Philip II of Spain, harshly persecuted Protestants and deepened divisions at home. To preserve a threatened, impoverished kingdom against Spain and Catholicism, Elizabeth's enigmatic character, veering unpredictably between extremes of procrastination and forthright action, was tailor-made for the long-term struggle.

Henry VIII dominates a pointed Protestant allegory of the Tudor succession. On his right stand the Catholics Bloody Mary and her husband, Philip of Spain backed by Mars, the god of war. On his left are the Protestants – his short-lived son Edward VI and Elizabeth ushering in Peace and Plenty.

The Escorial (above), Philip II's centre of state, was part monastery, part mausoleum and part mansion. It was a fitting residence for the darkly brooding King of Spain (right), consumed by his Messianic vision of a Catholic Empire. He was cold, remote and infinitely patient, and his pedantic obsession with detailed memoranda to his subordinates blinded him to the practicalities of conquest.

Mary Queen of Scots, seen above holding her son James, was famed for her flowing auburn hair. This fame acquired a gruesome twist when she died on the wooden scaffold in the great hall at Fotheringhay Castle (right): the executioner, trying to lift her severed head, swung aloft only an auburn wig, while Mary's head, with its short-cropped white hair, rolled away on the floor.

The Catholic Conspirators

Together, Mary Queen of Scots and Philip of Spain were a formidable threat.

Mary, driven from her native Scotland in 1567, fled to England proclaiming her right to the succession through her grandmother, Henry VIII's sister. Mary was imprisoned almost at once. But for another 19 years she remained the centre of the Catholic conspiracy, supported from afar by Philip, whose marriage to "Bloody" Mary Tudor and sense of divine mission gave him a perennial interest in restoring a Catholic to the British throne.

But both were shut off from reality. Philip, immured in his forbidding palace, the Escorial, brooded endlessly on ways of curbing England's "heretical wolf." Mary Queen of Scots, driven on by her own passion for romantic intrigue, spun out her hopes with messages to Philip and the Pope, smuggled out in shoes, mirrors or beer-barrels. "Ah!" exclaimed her brother-in-law, Charles of France, prophetically, "the poor fool will never cease until she loses her head."

So it turned out. Carefully provided with opportunities for treachery by Elizabeth's agents, Mary signed her own death-warrant by supporting rebellion in writing. She was beheaded in 1587, providing Philip, already incensed by Elizabeth's support of a Protestant rebellion in the Spanish Netherlands, with a clinching reason to fall upon England.

William Cecil, Lord Burghley – patient, hard-working and with a rare gift for political survival – was for 40 years the Queen's closest adviser.

Gloriana's Hesitant, Magnificent Rule

The Catholics' conspiratorial darts were turned less by counter-espionage than by the personal power acquired by Elizabeth, the brilliant, enigmatic Goddess-Queen, Gloriana, in a unique and unpredictable combination of play-acting, ruthlessness and vacillation.

She was a vulgar extrovert who swore "great mouth-filling oaths" and threw slippers at her ministers in rage – yet to disarm masculine opposition, she would also claim with emotion the "frail substance" of a woman. She surrounded her London Court with a veil of pomp, bestowing on her servants glory but little power. Politically, she was hard-headed, dedicated to the detailed business of good and economic government. As her faithful and devious Secretary, William Cecil, ruefully remarked after one of his many difficult encounters: "She is more than a man, and in truth sometimes less than a woman."

But above all, to the despair of her ministers, she hated to commit herself. She prevaricated over the choice of a husband, turning her many proposals to her own diplomatic advantage. In handling her two great problems – Mary and Spain – her approach was equally effective. For 19 years, she refused to execute Mary – and only did so when convinced that her people were united behind her. For 30 years, she avoided a direct confrontation with Philip – and by the time it came England was ready to fight and win.

Elizabeth, well aware of the need to captivate her people, makes one of her frequent, majestic public appearances.

After 30 years of Elizabeth's parsimonious rule, London, with 250,000 inhabitants, was the largest, richest city in Europe, though houses had not yet spread round Hyde Park or much beyond the Tower.

II. God's Obvious Design

Cold war flared into hot war and then just as quickly subsided. Elizabeth preferred to wage war inexpensively, and she thought she could gain more by seeking to corrupt Parma with an offer of a princely title and an independent kingdom than by cutting off his financial resources. As for Philip, he was content for the time being to let matters slide. His every waking hour was dedicated to the appointed task of destroying England, but the royal bureaucrat who laboured so diligently in the Lord's filing-system needed time; not a bolt of canvas, not a sack of grain, not a length of hemp could be purchased for God's Armada unless authorized in Madrid. Spain's greatest admiral and naval hero, the Marquis of Santa Cruz, had estimated that a fleet of 510 sail, 40 galleys, six galleasses, 30,000 sailors and 60,000 soldiers with provisions for eight months would be required to destroy English maritime power.

Such a fleet, though worthy of the cause on which the kingdom was embarking, was organizationally and econonomically impossible. Philip knew his own strength and settled for an Armada of 130 ships, 19,290 soldiers, 6,350 sailors and 2,080 galley-slaves. The King understood that there could be little hope of destroying English sea-power, but it did not seem too much to expect that naval supremacy could be maintained long enough to convoy the Duke of Parma's troops from Dunkirk to the Thames Estuary and gain a military victory.

In fact this was utterly impossible. Spanish ocean-going galleons were simply too deep for the shallow waters off Dunkirk. Parma knew it and begged for time to seize a deep-water port before the fleet sailed. Even Philip knew it, having been told of Parma's opinions by a diplomat who asked cogently: "Why not give it up now and save much time and money?"

Why not indeed? Because for Philip's unimaginative mind, there was no other way of achieving "God's obvious design." Every other possibility had been thoroughly inspected and dismissed. God could, therefore, be depended upon to sustain the faithful and give them victory. The odds meant nothing when fighting shoulder to shoulder with the Lord.

The new Captain-General of the Ocean, the seventh Duke of Medina Sidonia, had no such consolation; he had to command an expedition which was ill-fated from the start. It had been a terrible blow to Spanish naval morale when Santa Cruz, "the never vanquished," suddenly died of typhus fever, but it was an even greater blow to Medina Sidonia when he was appointed to replace the old mariner, for the Duke was invariably seasick and confessed that he knew far more about gardening than war. He did not hesitate to voice his doubts about both the enterprise and his own military qualifications, but a good Catholic and subject of the Crown could do nothing to persuade a sovereign who had but one answer to every problem: "If you fail, you fail, but the cause being the cause of God, you will not fail. Take heart and sail as soon as possible."

It was difficult to take heart; there was so much to be gathered: 123,790 cannonballs for 2,431 guns and culverins, unheard-of quantities of powder and shot, salt fish and biscuits from Andalusia, hemp and tar from the Baltic, oil from Italy – and every maravedi worth had to be accounted for and stored away. It was a Mediterranean enterprise – pikemen from Castile, gunners from southern France, Moorish slaves, Italian mercenaries and Portuguese sailors gathered together in Lisbon in the service of the Lord, but they died almost as fast as they swarmed into the pest-ridden city, and when the Duke held his first review 5,000 of his soldiers were already reported "dead, fled or sick."

Philip had written "sail as soon as possible," but in his haste he had failed to reckon with the English in his time schedule, for even before Medina Sidonia had taken command of the fleet, El Draque had struck again. He struck not at Lisbon, which was far too well protected, but at Cadiz where a portion of the Armada was being fitted out. The English attack in April, 1587, was another of those joint-stock company ventures designed to destroy the enemy and to make a profit in the process. Elizabeth provided four ships, Drake three, the Lord Admiral Howard one and the Levant Company seven, three of which were as large as any galleon in the navy. In all Sir Francis had 23 ships with which "to impeach the purpose of the Spanish fleet."

As with everything Drake did, the results were spectacular – 65 vessels, half of which were being made ready for the Armada, were scuttled and burnt in sight of the Castle of Cadiz. As Philip said, "the loss was not very great" for the main fleet was at Lisbon, but "the daring of the attempt was very great indeed," and to make it more destructive Drake swept up the Iberian coast looting and burning as he went. The Venetian Ambassador was correct: "the English are masters of the sea and hold it at their discretion, Lisbon and the whole coast are blockaded." Then to add to the injury, as well as to the pocket-books of English investors, Drake sailed on to the Azores where he encountered the *San Felippe* – a lumbering treasure carrack from the East, her cargo valued at £114,000, enough to pay for the entire expedition twice over. Elizabeth as was her due took £40,000; Drake received £17,000 and London merchants successfully demanded another £40,000.

Elizabeth had need of her money. Drake may have delayed Philip but he had not stopped the Armada, and from 1587 on the Queen had to keep her fleet on more or less constant war footing, a matter of £12,000 a month. At that price even Gloriana was impatient for war.

By May, 1588, the Armada was finally ready. Ships had been tarred, caulked and freshly painted, supplies had been stored away, galleons and merchantmen had been rebuilt to conform to the traditional Spanish idea of warships as floating castles at sea, crews had been assigned, soldiers taken aboard.

The fighting heart of the Armada was the 20 Portuguese and Castilian galleons, great lumbering fortresses carrying up to 52 guns, their main timbers four and five feet thick. They were built high in the stern and wide in the beam to give their musketeers an elevated platform from which to rake the enemy with gunshot and to cast grappling-hooks to prevent escape. In addition to the clumsy galleons, which rolled and plunged and required a mild hurricane to move, there were four Italian galleasses, each mounting 50 guns and rowed by 300 slaves. They were larger, heavier and more seaworthy than the light-oared Mediterranean gal-

This detailed chart was used by Drake when he raided Cadiz in 1587, "singeing the King of Spain's beard" by destroying over 30 Spanish vessels in the harbour.

leys, yet could outmanœuvre the galleons and match their firepower.

The second line of the Armada consisted of 40 merchantmen and carracks, some of them so large that "the ocean groaned under their weight" and all of them armed primarily to defend themselves from Barbary pirates and Muslim corsairs. The largest of the merchantmen, the Portuguese East Indiamen, were built like gigantic tubs, slow, seaworthy and practical. They had been refitted and rearmed and constituted a fighting force almost as formidable as the galleons. No fleet could do without its pinnaces, light, graceful and fast sloops, which were the eyes, ears and maids-of-all-work of the navy, and Medina Sidonia had managed to collect 34 of them.

Such was the fighting strength of the Armada. It was a fleet so impressive that even the English Admiral considered it the greatest the world had ever seen.

For almost a decade, however, Drake and others had been proving that ship for ship, gun for gun the Spanish were hopelessly outclassed. By 1588 they were also outnumbered; the Armada was to encounter an English fleet which when fully mobilized numbered over 200 sail, including 18 deadly galleons of Hawkins's revolutionary design.

Reflecting a new approach to naval warfare and the function of the galleon in battle, the English had done away with the towering superstructure of the traditional warship, and streamlined their vessels by increasing their length, cutting down on their width and levelling off their deck lines. The lofty castles at bow and stern, that added so to a ship's weight and made it difficult to sail, were discarded; and the pit or centre, where reserve contingents of soldiers huddled, protected by the thick sides of the galleons, was boarded over to make two new decks for heavy ship-destroying guns. The new outline was the technological expression of a profound tactical revolution which no longer treated the sailing vessel as a means of conducting land war at sea, but as an instrument of destruction suited to the ocean. Sink the enemy, not board and capture him like some fortress to be scaled and sacked: this was the aim of English sea-captains in their trim warships that could outpoint, outmanœuvre and outsail anything the Spanish had afloat.

Along with the new hull design came the introduction of lighter but more numerous and longer-range guns that could hurl a nine-pound shot half a mile. Spanish guns were heavier and could heave a 30-pound ball with indifferent accuracy possibly a quarter of a mile if the nine-foot barrel did not happen to explode. On both sides gunnery was still in its infancy. The amount of powder, the strength of the barrel and the timing of the charge in synchronization with the roll of the ship were matters largely of guesswork, and neither navy had any real idea of how many cannon-balls would be needed to sink a galleon or at what range a nine-pound shot hurled at high velocity or a 30-pounder thrown less violently would penetrate a man-of-war's timber.

Over and above its military dominance, the Elizabethan navy had one unmatchable advantage: it was fighting in home waters, close to supplies, while the

One of a mid-17th-Century set of Armada playing-cards spells out decades after the fact the Pope's promise to support Philip.

Spanish were 1,000 miles from their major base in Lisbon. The Spanish captains who sailed in God's service were fully aware of the risks, and they acknowledged that only divine interference could possibly rectify the military imbalance. The destruction of such a foul and monstrous dragon of heresy as Elizabeth could not be accomplished in a spirit of revenge or conquest. It could only be achieved in humility and righteousness, and officers and men, sailors and soldiers were ordered to confess and hear Mass before setting sail. Gambling and swearing were outlawed, prostitutes were forbidden on board and no unclean thing or person was allowed to accompany so sublime a venture. Medina Sidonia himself, passing through lines of kneeling crusaders, bore to the Armada the holy standard of the fleet from the altar of the Cathedral of Lisbon.

Throughout the fleet, every seaman and soldier thrilled to a sense of moral superiority which more than compensated for the sour taste of military inferiority. It was not too much to count on God's help against barbarous, heretical people who made no account of soul or conscience, disobeyed God, disregarded the saints and thought nothing of the Pope. "We are sailing against England," said one Spanish sea-captain, "in the confident hope of a miracle" which will send "some strange freak of weather" or will deprive "the English of their wits."

The two fleets sighted one another for the first time off Dodman Point, on the Cornish coast, during the early evening of July 30, the English sails sparkling in the red glare of the setting sun, and the Spanish galleons black silhouettes in the fading light. The long haul from Corunna, where the Armada had refitted after leaving Lisbon, had been made in just under ten days. The weather was abominable, as it had been all that summer, and five Spanish ships – four unseaworthy galleys designed for Mediterranean waters and a 768-ton converted merchantman – had failed to reach the rendezvous off the Lizard. Though Medina Sidonia's fleet had already been reduced to 125 sail, Charles Howard, the English Lord Admiral, had only 54 in readiness. The rest of his vessels were still preparing for action or patrolling the Channel off the enemy-held ports. Given time, the Lord Admiral could collect a grand fleet of some 200 vessels; until then he planned to test his strength against the Spanish by a series of running broadsides. The action from Eddystone to Calais was a noisy gun-duel of swift English sea-dogs circling an infuriated Spanish bull.

On the morning of July 31, Medina Sidonia was alarmed to discover that the English, who had slipped out from Plymouth well to the lee of the Spaniards, had during the night, incredible as it seemed, gained the weather gauge. Naval historians often consider this feat to have been the decisive manœuvre of the week-long engagement, for thereafter Howard never lost the advantage of position. Decisive the move may have been, but it was no great feat; it was merely portentous evidence that Hawkins's newly designed vessels could tack well into the eye of the wind and achieve any position they chose. In answer to the English manœuvre, the Duke ordered his fleet to battle-stations and placed his squadrons in a perfectly executed crescent formation, his strongest galleons clustered at the point of each horn, his troop-carriers and clumsier merchantmen in the centre.

The Spanish, in their dangerously strong defensive crescent, waited with confidence for the gaily coloured English fleet – the red-painted *White Bear*, the black and white *Bonaventure*, the brown *Lion*, the green and white *Revenge* – to commence the attack. The British, however, had no intention of facing almost certain death by sailing between the deadly prongs of the crescent and engaging in a general mêlée of grappling and boarding. Instead, they approached, wheeled off, and, firing four shots to the Spanish one, raked the Armada with burst after burst of cannon-shot. The entire encounter was nothing more than an extensive gunnery practice, neither side doing the other any harm, for Howard never came close enough either to risk the timber-splitting Spanish 30-pounders or to permit his own nine-pounders to penetrate the Spanish hulls.

Thoroughly frustrated, both sides gave up the fight, and Medina Sidonia proproceeded majestically up the Channel with Lord Admiral Howard worrying him from behind and adding ship after ship as both fleets approached Calais. On the evidence of the first few days of battle, the English were increasingly alarmed that after all the Armada might meet Parma, and there seemed to be nothing they could do to prevent it. The Spanish, plagued by bad luck and unable to come to grips with a swift and nimble enemy, were equally concerned. One great ship, the

The caption of this card exaggerates the defensive measures England took to protect her coast against the Spaniards.

46-gun *Rosario*, carrying 55,000 golden ducats and 418 sailors and soldiers, fouled her neighbour, broke her own bowsprit and lost her foremast. She was unable to keep up with the fleet and fell prey to Drake's waiting galleons. Another vessel, the *San Salvador*, suddenly exploded in full sight of the fleet, sending hundreds of sailors and soldiers into the sea. There is a legend that a Spanish captain caned a Dutch master-gunner for insubordination, and the gunner, in a rage, thrust a flaming linstock into the stern powder-magazine and himself leaped through a porthole into the sea.

Between Eddystone and Calais the unsatisfactory and indecisive battle of July 31 was repeated three times over. Throughout the week the Spaniard's discipline and morale remained as impressive as ever, even if their supply of cannon-balls was running desperately low and they had inflicted no damage upon the enemy. The English were still unable to stop the Armada and their cannonading continued to bounce harmlessly off the thick sides of the Spanish men-of-war. If the laurels of victory had been handed out on August 6, the decision might have been given to Medina Sidonia, who had brought his fleet, as instructed, safely to anchor off the Calais Roads to wait for a chance to rendezvous with Parma, encamped 30 miles away at Dunkirk.

But in fact the fleet was already doomed. On Sunday morning, August 7, Medina Sidonia was told by couriers from Parma that the Great Enterprise was hopeless. Parma's troops and barges were bottled up at Dunkirk where the harbour was too shallow to receive the Duke's heavy galleons, and the Armada, its stores spoiling, its ammunition expended and its water-barrels leaking, had passed the point of no return. The wind and a superior English fleet prevented any chance of retreat through the Channel, while ahead lay the treacherous and uninviting waters of the North Sea. The next crushing blow fell in the early hours of August 8, when the unnerved Spaniards saw eight blazing fireships driving down on their vessels.

The possibility that the enemy might resort to fire to dislodge the Armada from its anchorage was only to be expected. Fire at sea was the gravest menace faced by men and ships, and Medina Sidonia had ordered every galleon to mark well its anchor and be ready to slip, but not to cut, its cables, in order to side-step the fireships if they should penetrate the ring of pinnaces stationed to intercept and tow them to shore.

What the Duke was unable to guard against was hysteria in his troops when they saw the frigates, their rigging and tarred decks on fire and their cannon spiked and loaded so that the white-hot guns would explode and add molten metal and thunderous explosions to the flaming inferno. Spanish nerve, strained by sleepless nights and exhausting days of inconclusive fighting, finally snapped. Against orders, the captains cut their cables and ran for it. The Armada was no longer a fighting machine but a formless throng of ships headed for certain destruction at the hands of the English or on the sandy shoals of the Flemish coast. Next morning, only five ships remained in position, having obeyed Medina Sidonia's orders to slip cable and then return to their anchorage.

Despite his success, it was now clear to Howard that English nine-pound culverins could do Medina Sidonia's heavy battleships no real harm unless Howard was willing to close the range and risk Spanish heavy artillery. Now reinforced by the vessels which had been blockading Parma's barges, this the Lord Admiral was prepared to do. At last, he had a decided numerical superiority.

Somehow, Medina Sidonia got his fleet back into its familiar defensive crescent formation. Twenty-five of his most powerful galleons and galleasses had recovered from the panic of the night and answered the Admiral's call to battle-stations off Gravelines. All day the battle raged. Drake's ships swept in close but never quite close enough for the Spanish to grapple and board them. The English delivered terrible broadsides and then veered off, either to wheel about and thunder still another salvo or to move on to the next Spanish galleon.

For the first time Medina Sidonia's warships ran red with blood and even from a distance the English could see the gore dripping from scuppers and cannon-hatches. As the four-foot oaken walls were finally smashed and the lighter superstructures demolished, men died as often from flying splinters as they did from gun- and musket-shot. Spanish gallantry was magnificent, but as cannon were smashed or ran out of shot, there was little else left with which to fight. The *San Mateo*, scarcely able to stay afloat and with half her company dead, invited her tormentors to stand-to and fight like men, and when an English officer, judging her condition to be hopeless, climbed the rigging of his own warship and offered terms of honourable surrender, he received a musket-ball for an answer. As the English galleon backed away, the Spanish crew jeered at the heretics for being cowardly hens who dared not board and fight man to man.

In every action of the battle the story was the same – a magnificent Spanish fleet that begged to be allowed at least to die honourably. Time and time again the crescent formation was broken only to be re-formed, and when the last cannon was fired and the battle over, Howard was still unaware of how desperate was Medina Sidonia's plight. He was depressed; a rainstorm and his own shortage of food and ammunition had allowed the enemy to escape. Actually, however, the Spaniards were mortally stricken, and Sir Francis Drake judged correctly that Parma and Medina Sidonia would never shake hands and that neither of them would "greatly rejoice at this day's service."

Halberds, curved swords and sabres from a captured Spanish galleon decorate the Ace of Spades in commemoration of victory.

THE GREAT ARMADA

When the Spanish Armada sailed in 1588, it was the most massive naval force the world had ever seen. But its stately vessels were no more than cumbersome floating castles, from which soldiers – who outnumbered sailors two to one – were expected to board enemy vessels. To crush the highly manœuvrable, well-sailored British fleet, negotiate the treacherous shoals of the Dutch coast, and then pick up additional troops with which to invade England would indeed have demanded the divine support on which King Philip counted. None was granted despite the flags inscribed "Arise, Lord, and vindicate your cause." Within ten days, the gale-battered Spaniards were staggering homeward, following the route in the map above, one of a series done in England to record the battle.

A contemporary painting shows English ships (with the red-cross flag of St. George) in the mêlée of battle with the Spanish fleet.

The First Sight of the Spanish Leviathans

The threat of Spanish invasion terrified the nation. Though the English fleet was strong, everyone was aware of the rottenness of home defences – English cities were unwalled and ungarrisoned, and English yeomen had grown soft and fat during decades of peace. Worst of all, there was the fear that a Catholic fifth column might aid the Spaniards.

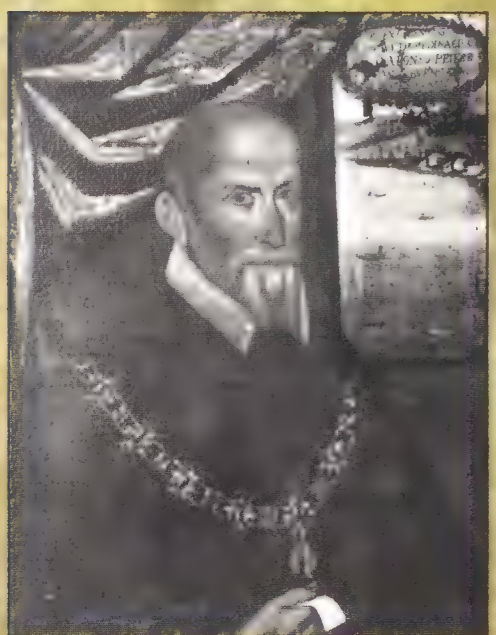
In the event, the English Catholics were more patriotic than popish. Along with their Protestant countrymen, they barricaded ports, placed guns at strategic points and set up a chain of warning beacons and bonfires along the coastline.

On July 30, 1588, the Spanish Armada, neatly assembled off Lizard Point in Cornwall, was sighted by some of Drake's vessels scouting out of Plymouth. According to legend, Drake himself was playing bowls with Charles Howard, the Lord Admiral, when he heard the news. "There is plenty of time to finish the game," he remarked, "and to thrash the Spaniards too." The story may or may not be true – it was first recorded 40 years later – but it epitomizes English confidence.

The English fleet put out of port the same evening, and the first skirmish the next morning achieved little: the wary English stayed out of range of the Spanish cannon, but themselves inflicted little damage. It was a pattern often repeated in the next few days, as the Armada continued its stately progress in unbroken formation up the Channel.

The Armada assembles off Lizard Point, while Spanish and English scout ships – their courses marked by lines – survey their enemies.

The English fleet cautiously wends its way out of Plymouth to harass the Spanish, now formed in a perfect crescent.



The melancholy, inexperienced Duke of Medina Sidonia was the Armada's reluctant leader.

Charles Howard, English Lord Admiral, had a bubbling enthusiasm for his task.

After a minor clash (left), the tight Spanish crescent heads up-Channel again, pursued by the English (right).

Hell-burners of Calais

"Their force was wonderful great and strong, yet we pluck their feathers little by little." So wrote Lord Admiral Howard of the Armada's floating fortresses, as they moved up past the Isle of Wight.

Luck, more than good tactics, came to the aid of the British in the early stages of the battle. The Spanish *Rosario*, broke her bowsprit and a mast, and fell prey to Drake's waiting ships; and the *San Salvador* suddenly and inexplicably exploded in full sight of the Armada, pitching hundreds of men into the sea.

After a week of running battle, Spanish morale, sapped by the days of inconclusive fighting, was dangerously low. On the night of August 7, as the Spaniards lay anchored off Calais, Lord Admiral Howard sent in fireships, and the Spaniards, terror-stricken at the onslaught by the flaming, pitch-encrusted hulks, slipped their cables and scattered in panic. The next day's battle ended the threat of invasion, and the remaining Spanish ships fled into the mists of the North Sea towards the treacherous crags of Scotland and Ireland.

Drake became the envy of all when he seized the ***Rosario*** and all her spoils, the richest prize taken by the English.

With their fireships, stacke

with double-loaded cannon which fired at random in the intense heat, the English at last broke the tightly packed ranks of the Armada.

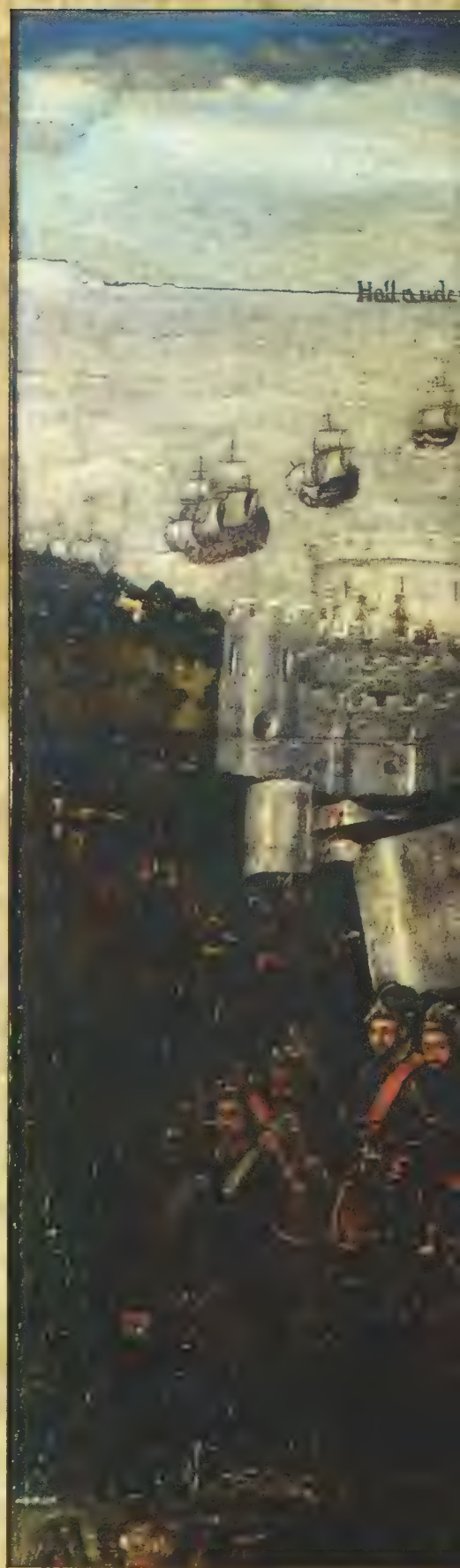
"God Blew, and they were scattered"

The Armada was beaten, but for a long time no one knew it. When the English ships reached the Thames, uncertain of their victory, Queen Elizabeth was inspecting her troops at Tilbury. The camp, after a fortnight of chaos, now made a brave show, with its troops of plumed horsemen, neatly dug ditches and colourful pavilions. The Queen, wearing white velvet and mounted on a white horse, told her troops in words that were soon legendary: "I come to live or die amongst you all. . . . I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a King of England too. . . . Rather than any dishonour shall grow by me, I myself will take up arms, I myself will be your general, judge, and rewarder."

Meanwhile, wildfire rumours of the battle raced through Europe. Madrid and Rome rejoiced at a reported fight off Newcastle in which the English lost 40 ships. Drake was thought to be captured. Czechs were told that 8,000 Spaniards and 30 guns had landed at Plymouth.

But by the end of September, the world knew the truth and Protestant Europe rejoiced with England. The Dutch struck a medal showing the terrestrial globe slipping from the Spanish grasp. "*Afflavit Deus*," trumpeted Elizabeth's commemorative medal, "*et dissipati sunt*": "God blew and they were scattered." And English caricatures of the Armada proclaimed: "She came, she saw, she fled."

The "Invincible" Armada flees into the North Sea, pursued by the English, to start its ruinous, two-week voyage home. Hunger, storm and shipwreck completed its humiliation.



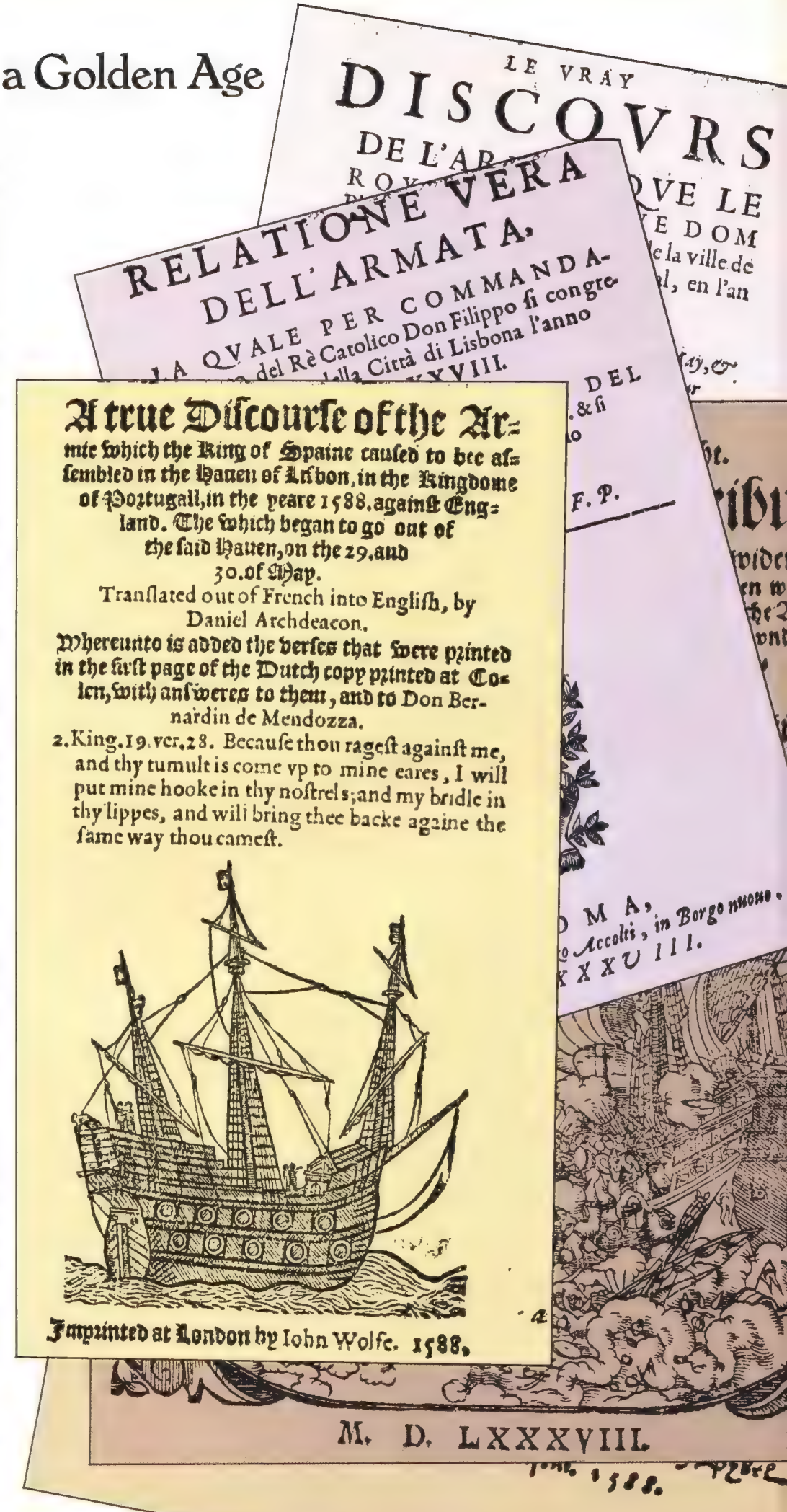
Queen Elizabeth rides among her troops at Tilbury, against a metaphorical picture of the Spanish Armada in flames.

III. The Twilight of a Golden Age

Indeed, Medina Sidonia had no cause to rejoice, for his condition the morning after the Battle of Gravelines was even worse than he had imagined. Not only had he been beaten in open battle off Gravelines and saved from total destruction only by a chance squall, but also, during the night, three of his finest warships had been lost, one having gone to the bottom and the others having run aground to save themselves from sinking. More serious than leaking hulls and broken rigging was the wind that was driving the entire fleet to certain destruction on the shallow sandbars off Flushing. Then about noon the miracle for which 30,000 men had so fervently prayed was delivered. As the leadsmen called out the depth and sailors could almost feel the sand under their ships' keels, the wind suddenly boxed the compass and steadied at a point that allowed the entire fleet to slip past the Dutch coast in safety and into the grey-green waters of the North Sea northwards towards the wind-lashed Hebrides.

When Medina Sidonia was finally able to take stock, he discovered that the Armada was in greater peril of dying from thirst and from the punishing weather than of being destroyed by the English. Horses and mules were cast overboard to save water. Each day, as the fleet ran northwards before the wind to a point where it could turn west round the Shetland Islands, the Armada grew smaller as the slower and clumsier vessels dropped away into the fog. By the 21st, 3,000 men were mortally ill. For two more weeks the battered galleons made no progress at all in their desperate efforts to tack against a perverse wind. Doggedly they tried to inch westwards, far enough to avoid being swept by giant Atlantic rollers on to the sheer cliffs and boiling shores of the Irish coast. Eight great ships, one of the galleasses and two of the heavy freighters failed in the attempt. Vessel after vessel was flung upon rock and sand to be pounded to pieces by tides and waves. Their crews drowned, and at Sligo, in Donegal Bay, on a five-mile stretch of beach, there lay "eleven hundred dead bodies of men, which the sea had driven upon the shore."

So many lurid tales have been written about the savage doings on the Irish



Pamphlets in English, French, German, Italian and Dutch, published in the last months of 1588, triumphantly spread the news of England's victory throughout Europe.

coast that it is impossible now to say what really happened. Possibly, officers and noblemen, if they escaped drowning, were killed by the Irish peasants for their finery, and the Prince of Ascoli, Philip's illegitimate son, was murdered for his silk stockings, satin doublet and gold lace. More likely both aristocrats and commoners were butchered by order of Sir William Fitzwilliam, Elizabeth's Lord Deputy of Ireland.

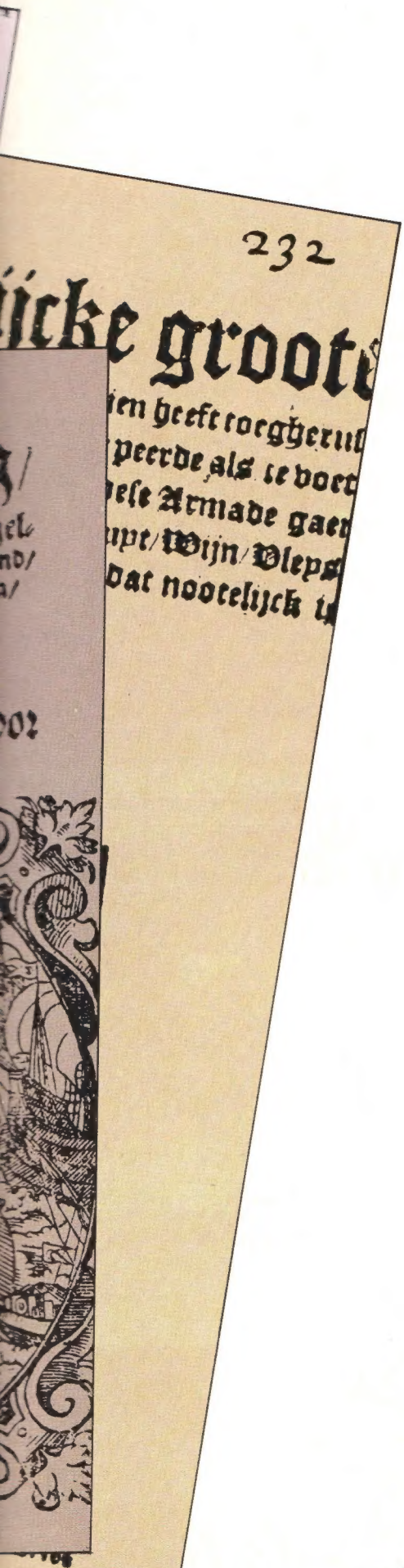
More ships survived the agony than could humanly have been expected, and perhaps a second miracle took place: the amazing strength that allowed Medina Sidonia and his bleeding crews to bring home a limping squadron of some 66 sail. It was a useless and tragic feat. Half the vessels never sailed again, and two-thirds of the men who were still alive when the Duke sighted Spain arrived home only to die of disease, dysentery and hunger within the month.

An Armada had died, but Philip and Medina Sidonia, Hawkins and Drake lived on. The Duke was singled out as the scapegoat for the disaster, but in the quiet of the Escorial his master did not blame him for what, after all, had been the Lord's will: "In God's actions," the King said, "reputation is neither lost nor gained." Philip would never give up; if one Armada had failed, then a second and a third must be built, each better than the last, and the remaining decade of his life was spent rebuilding his navy and learning how to cope with those experienced old sea-dogs who had once been Elizabeth's beardless boys – Drake, Hawkins, Raleigh, Frobisher, Grenville and the rest.

The defeat of the Armada constituted an absolute, if temporary, upset of the balance of naval power. In time the balance would return; Elizabethans would grow old, domestic controversy would engulf the kingdom, and Spain would learn to defend her treasure fleets with 40 great galleons, half of which had been built on the English model, and to transport her riches in fast, new frigates able to outfight or outrun anything in the Queen's Navy; but for the next ten years God was all English and Elizabethans continued to achieve wonders. Drake's attack on Corunna and Lisbon in 1589 which was designed to finish off Spain as a naval power proved to be something less than a success, largely because English commanders, as their mistress rightly complained, "went to places more for profit than for service" and were careless of military strategy when honour was at stake, but events thereafter were filled with more than enough profit and glory to outweigh one failure.

Almost every summer an English squadron went forth to intercept the treasure *flota* as it approached the Azores, and in 1592 the 1,600-ton, seven-deck Portuguese carrack, the *Madre de Dios*, valued at £150,000 – more than Elizabeth realized in an entire year out of her regular peacetime revenues – was captured. A syndicate of London merchants did even better. They banded together and turned to privateering in lieu of legitimate trade, averaging annually between £150,000 and £300,000 in "liberated" Spanish hides, sugar and spices.

Even when Spanish gold escaped them, Elizabeth's captains found honour aplenty, and that incredible sea-dog, Sir Richard Grenville, chose immortality rather than flee from a Spanish fleet. He and Lord Admiral Howard were caught in 1591 with a flotilla of six ships by Philip's West Indian Guard of 20 galleons. Howard ordered his squadron to run for it, but Sir Richard in the *Revenge* preferred to face the entire Spanish Navy single-handed. It was spectacular but suicidal, and after having sunk or crippled four great galleons, the *Revenge*, a mutilated hulk, surrendered, its crew of more pedestrian character than its commander who had to be forcibly prevented from falling on his sword. In the end, Grenville



Sir Richard Grenville, scourge of Spanish treasure ships, died in 1591 with suicidal heroism: in his ship the *Revenge* he took on 20 Spanish galleons rather than surrender.

died – one story says he politely drank the wine his admiring captors gave him and then methodically ate the goblet – and the *Revenge* herself sank a few days later in a violent storm that destroyed half the Spanish fleet.

Grenville's behaviour, even the documented portion, became naval legend and convinced the Spanish that the English were in league with the Devil, but despite supernatural powers – Satanic or otherwise – nothing seemed to be able to check Philip's naval might permanently, and in 1596 Elizabeth decided on yet another direct attack against Spanish military installations at Cadiz. Over 100 vessels, 17 of them the Queen's own galleons, and 6,000 men under the joint command of Lord Admiral Howard and the Earl of Essex, with Raleigh as Vice-Admiral, sailed from Plymouth in June, 1596. For once, honour, histrionics, profit and obedience coincided, and in spite of captains whose infernal pride made any concerted military action more a matter of accident than design, the expedition was the most spectacular success of the Elizabethan Age.

By the sheerest good luck, the entire West Indian treasure fleet was at anchor as the English sailed into Cadiz. and only four huge galleons – named after the Apostles – and a small squadron of galleys had been left to protect them. Two of the Apostles had been in at the death of the *Revenge*, and Raleigh set the pace of the battle by heading straight for them, resolved on retribution, his trumpeter disdainfully answering Spanish salvoes with blasts on his horn. Within hours two of the Apostles had been captured and two had exploded, and English troops were wading ashore with Essex in their lead beating time on his drum.

By evening Cadiz had been overrun and Howard began bargaining with the city fathers over the ransom of the merchant fleet cowering in the inner harbour. Unfortunately, English troops were having far too good a time looting the city; Medina Sidonia had the final word – he would have no part in vulgar mercantile haggling, and disdainfully he ordered the entire fleet of 36 vessels burned, cargo and all. Elizabeth, when she heard what her captains had missed by their own carelessness, was provoked beyond measure – her commercial instincts were outraged at such waste and her Exchequer was out of pocket by several million ducats.

Even so the victory was staggering: four of Philip's largest galleons, 15 great merchantmen and a raft of lesser craft had been destroyed or captured; 120,000 ducats had been extracted in ransom-money and the President of the Contratacion of Seville carried off to London in the expectation that he was worth at least another 100,000; and Cadiz had been stripped of everything an English sailor could carry away with him – bedding, silk gowns, jewellery, church bells, furniture, tapestries and expensive clerical vestments.

Cadiz was the climax. Thereafter the war ground to its costly, inconclusive end, and though the strutting of Essex and Raleigh before the walls of Cadiz dazzled the world, two other events had already taken place that more accurately foretold the future. On August 28, 1595, Sir John Hawkins and Sir Francis Drake went avoyaging for the last time. It was an expedition of 27 ships and 2,500 men, planned in the grand buccaneering style of the past, and it achieved nothing. As usual, Drake trusted to luck and it finally ran out. Wherever the old campaigner went – Puerto Rico, Nombre de Dios, Cartagena and the Isthmus – he was met with high walls and Spanish guns, for Philip had learned how to fortify his Empire and guard his treasures. Hawkins died just before the abortive attack on Puerto Rico, grieving that he had ever encouraged his Queen to invest in such a mismanaged and futile venture and bequeathing her £2,000 as conscience money; Drake carried on alone, promising always to bring his fleet "to twenty places far more wealthy and easier to be gotten," but could not fulfil his promise; he succumbed to dysentery and, depressed at his failure, he died on January 27, 1596. He was buried at sea somewhere off Porto Bello, and with him went something of the exuberance and nerve of the Elizabethan Age.

As the new century approached, each side learned new ways – Spain to share the Caribbean trade even though well into the 18th Century she sought to close her South American ports to foreign merchants, and England to concentrate on colonization as being, in the long run, more profitable than war and buccaneering. The process took time, and far into the 17th Century men remembered the good old days of those joint-stock company ventures when the Queen and her London merchants had each made £40,000. Though the spirit changed and a new dynasty sat upon the Tudor throne, the old arrogance, the aggressive economic and military self-confidence so characteristic of Drake, Hawkins and Grenville never totally disappeared ❧

By victory over Spain, Elizabeth became, in this Dutch cartoon of 1598, dominant in Europe. Her head overlays Spain, her right arm reaches down over Italy and her sword-bearing left hand fends off the Pope.

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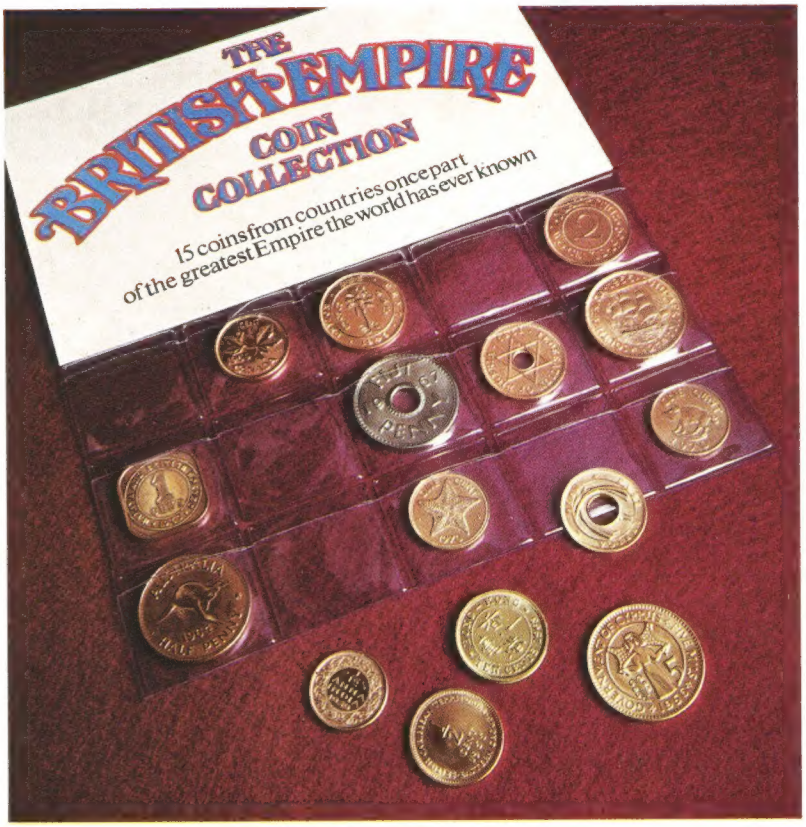

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This splendid Jubilee mug for only 90p and 4 tokens!

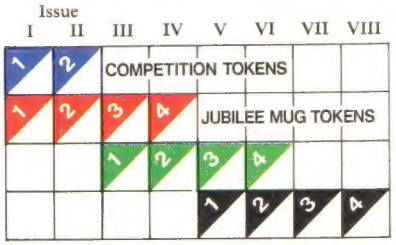
Add this classic piece to your collection of precious china. A beautiful reproduction in finest quality Crown Staffordshire bone china, it would sell for at least £1·50 in the shops – if you could buy it. In fact, it's exclusive to readers of The British Empire.

Of approximately half-pint capacity, it stands $4\frac{3}{4}$" high and carries a specially commissioned replica of an authentic Jubilee design in black on translucent white bone china. A discreet touch of gold completes the extremely elegant design.

To get this superb mug you need to send in 90p together with the red tokens from issues 1, 2, 3 and 4. This issue contains the 3rd token and the last token is in next week's issue. Make sure of your copy now! Applications must be received by March 31st.

How the token scheme works

Each week, there are two tokens on the inside front cover of The British Empire. This week, there's the third red Jubilee Mug token and the first green British Empire Coin Collection token. Each week, you should collect these tokens to take advantage of the exciting offers that are on their way. And every week, as you collect towards the current offer, you'll be getting a start towards the next. The chart shows you how it all works.



Note: If you miss a token, your newsagent will be able to order the appropriate back number of The British Empire for you.

Mid-Victorian morning or walking dresses, 1872